1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

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the Mbuti world. The other principle becomes one of the forest sprites, the *befe*, living with the earthly divinity, Toré, and assisting him in his lordship of the forest. Far from representing the dead, these sprites are regarded as knaves, to be fought with as such. In legends they are concerned principally with the hunt and frequently try to trick the Pygmy out of his prey to which, as *befe*, they have a right themselves. If they represented the souls of the dead, suggests Schebesta, the Mbuti would hardly be able to take the attitude toward them that they do.

Death may also be regarded by the Pygmy as a punishment visited on man for one of three sins. God forbade his children to look at him, but one of his daughters was overcome by curiosity, and death resulted. (This legend is actually found more frequently among the net hunters than the archers.) God forbade his children to follow him on a certain path, but they became impatient and followed, and death resulted. God (Muri-muri) left fire in the care of his mother, Matu; but a Pygmy stole it from her and she died from cold, so Muri-muri condemned all men to die. This curiosity, impatience, and greed are severally cited as causes of death.

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761 773 • [184]

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notions and practices of the archers and their totemism in their belief in *megbe*, the vital force dispensed, in part, by the divinity. It is one of the life principles, distinct from that which becomes a star or a sprite after death. *Megbe* is transformed anew into the totem when the body dies. The divinity possesses it in totality; astral beings are endowed with far more *megbe* than mortals; hence, their greater power and strength which derive from *megbe*. Mortals, then, have to reinforce their store of this vital force to give themselves additional strength and power. There are certain practices by which this may be achieved, notably by the use of bells hung about different parts of the body. When a man dies, his son may put his lips to those of his father to capture the *megbe* as it passes from his body.

By increasing his store of *megbe* the Mbuti can place himself on the same level as supernatural beings with whom he must have dealings. Schebesta cites legends showing how the Mbuti managed to steal fire from Toré by the use of bells to increase their *megbe*.

761 778 778 761 789 [773]

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Various rites and magical instruments are logically consistent with this notion: the *segbe* pipes that are able to deflect the storm, attract game, or defeat the enemy; the magic horn of the *maigwa* antelope that seeks out thieves; and the various charms and amulets used by hunters either on their bodies or on their weapons. Certain animals are reputed to possess an abundance of *megbe*, notably crows, crabs, the snake (*mageda*), the antelope (*maigwa*), the chameleon, the toad, and the tortoise.

According to various legends, menstrual blood is also possessed of magical force.

Opposed to *megbe* is *uda*, the force of black magic. As mentioned above, the archer accepts death as inevitable, the recalling by God of *boru e'i*, the life principle Schebesta translates as "soul." But death may be caused by sorcerers through the use of *uda*. *Uda* is associated with menstrual blood, and Schebesta compares this notion with the legends that explain one cause of death as being the curiosity or greed of woman. This second cause of death, through *uda*, is thus attributed to the "original sin" of woman, who from curiosity or greed violated God's laws or lured man to do so.

Costermans (1938) and Boelaert (1936a) both criticize Schebesta on this point, saying that the material does not justify his conclu-

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[NET HUNTERS]

There seems to be a very vague belief in a malign force similar to the *uda* described by Schebesta (1948, 527 ff.), and for which the net hunters use the villager term, *ulozi*. It is generally associated with very old people and with cripples who, not through any malevolence but rather because of their condition, may cause death. If someone is thought to be possessed of *ulozi*, he may be put to death. The Putnam material records the Mbuti as beating one old woman accused of being a *lozi*. She was prevented from being beaten to death by Putnam's putting forward an effective argument as to why she could not possess *ulozi*. This same old woman, however, died two years later following an epidemic in a camp where she was staying, and where two Pygmies died. The old woman died when the camp was broken, before they reached the new camp, and no explanation was given. She certainly had not contracted the disease. Putnam mentions other instances of the disappearance of people, particularly the aged and crippled.

In legend the *lozi* are accredited with being the most gluttonous cannibals, devouring corpses in the middle of the night. Apparently, if a Pygmy wakes up and sees a *lozi* feasting on one of his comrades, that person will merely become sick. If the *lozi* is not seen at his (or her)

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2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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Death itself is recognized as deriving from the forest, so is accepted with regret, but there is enormous concern to conceal the regret and avoid any excessive show of grief, for crying is *akami*. The uncomfortable fact of death has to be obliterated from the memory as quickly and effectively as possible, and the band, which has received a blow at its strength, must be rejuvenated in an exaggerated display of all the things pleasing to the forest—good hunting, singing, dancing, feasting and, above all, *ekimi*. More than this, the *molimo*, as we have seen, is a means of reaffirming the effective division of the band into age groups, and through both the participation of the old lady, who demonstrates the power of the women over the men, and through the *ekokomea* dance, the lack of sex differentiation is emphasized. *Ekokomea* may also be regarded in a similar light as the erotic dance over the fire, where the men symbolically copulate over the scattered embers, fanning them to life. Certainly the sexual act is represented in the *molimo* dances, if not in the symbolism of the *molimo* trumpet itself and the way in which it is handled, and there is very evidently expressed concern with the regeneration of life.

The *molimo* is also an occasion on which the band reaffirms all its interpersonal loyalties, and its unity as a band, regardless of kinship considerations. (This is not to deny that the band, and the *molimo*, may at one time have had a more definitely lineal structure.) It is significant that it insists on participation by all adult males, including not only affines but adult visitors living temporarily with the band under an obligation, default in which is punishable by death. Such death itself is said to be brought by the *molimo*; informants differed as to *how* death would actually take place—some said by two spears, some by beating—but in all cases it was held that the *molimo* would bring death to any who did not fulfill his obligations.

Thus the forest is intimately associated with the Mbuti at death, just as it is at birth. The same forest that gives life and strength through the juices of the vine, and through the vine and wooden charms tied around an infant's wrist, may bring death to that infant, if as an adult he fails to rejoice the forest during the *molimo* festival.

Fire, which is the gift of the forest, but whose ownership is disputed, is central in the life of the Mbuti, representing life itself. (One legend has it that fire was first owned by a chimpanzee; another by woman; another by the *keti*. In any case, man [Mbuti] ultimately stole it and now possesses it.) During the *molimo*, men pass their hands through the flames and then rub gently over their faces. The *molimo* trumpet is passed over the flames. Sometimes men put coals

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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765 562 the men rearranged themselves at the kumamolimo without making any mention of what had happened.

I looked at Moke, and found him staring at me curiously. He understood my question and nodded. Yes, this was what he had told me I was yet to see.

765 562 793 There is an old legend that once it was the women who "owned" the molimo, but the men stole it from them and ever since the women have been forbidden to see it. Perhaps this was a way of reminding the men of the origin of their molimo. There is another old legend which tells that it was a woman who stole fire from the chimpanzees or, in yet another version, from the great forest spirit. Perhaps the dance had been in imitation of this. I did not understand it by any means, but somehow it seemed to make sense.

562 The woman is not discriminated against in BaMbuti society as she is in some African societies. She has a full and important role to play. There is relatively little specialization according to sex. Even the hunt is a joint effort. A man is not ashamed to pick mushrooms and nuts if he finds them, or to wash and clean a baby. A woman is free to take part in the discussions of men, if she has something relevant to say. In fact, it was the apparent absolute dominance of the male in the molimo that had seemed to be the exception.

562 372 182 But now even in this the woman had come into her own. She had asserted her prior claim to the fire of life, and her ability to destroy it, to extinguish life. Or had she been destroying it? Perhaps when she was kicking the fire out in all directions among the menfolk she was giving it to them, for them to gather and rebuild and revitalize with the dance of life.

765 533 I was trying to puzzle it all out when the singing started again, and I saw that the old woman had returned, alone. All the others were in their huts, and the men seemed to be singing as though by their song they could drive the last remaining female away. They sang louder and harder, but she kept circling the kumamolimo, keep-

262 foods. This may be due to a recognized allergy, to some unpleasant association, or to any one of a number of causes. The animals involved in these tabus include porcupines, snakes, and other slow game not found among the clan totems.

825 703 The animals of the forest, which symbolize clans, sexes, and individual and conditional idiosyncrasies, are very real people to the pygmies. In the old days, the mythical time, they could all talk and were on an even footing with men. Each species was symbolized by one individual, who was given an honorific name, as Mr. Turtle, Mr. Gray Antelope, or Mr. Chimpanzee. Mr. Turtle was a very wise and tricky individual, and the smallest antelope of all was King of the Beasts. The pygmies and their Negro hosts have an elaborate folklore about these animals and all their doings which might shed considerable light on their human relations.

821 **Ritual symbols.**—To the pygmies, water, rain, storm, thunder, lightning, snakes, and rainbows are all parts of a single symbolic configuration. The elements of this configuration, of course, represent the sudden rainstorms which arise without warning in the afternoons and sometimes, rarely, in the mornings as well. These may prevent hunting; flood huts; cause dead limbs to fall, crushing huts and killing people; or occasionally kill them by bolts of lightning. No other element in their life causes so much disturbance or upsets them so profoundly.

706 [71] Both pygmies and Negroes believe in a *Nyama ya mai* (Swahili) or water animal, who lurks in streams and plays dangerous tricks on people. Sometimes he tips canoes over; sometimes he will grab the ankle of a woman fording a stream, so that she slips, and may even drown. If any serious mishap occurs in or in connection with the